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20 Years On

which reveal the raw beauty of Ambroglio's Beth Orton-esque phrasing and the exquisite dexterity of Chasny's six-string supremacy, that truly showcase this project's folk pulchritude. **Ron Hart**

Silvertone

New York City SELF-RELEASED



There is a refreshing modern flair to the country rock atmosphere that permeates **Silvertone's**

debut release. Fronted by songwriter **Eric Silverman**, and featuring **Adam Reich** on guitar and background vocals, the band infuses its Nashville, Tenn.-tinged tunes with an overtone of big city sharpness. Silverman, a newcomer to the scene, has done his homework while honing his artistic chops. He enlisted two Nashville veterans, keyboardist **Hargus "Pig" Robbins**, who collaborated with Bob Dylan, and steel guitarist **Lloyd Green**, who played with The Byrds, to color some rather engaging pieces. From the contemplative ("Trouble") to the cautionary ("Fireflies") to the compassionate ("I've Been Dreaming") to the cracks within ("Where Has All the Love Gone"), **Silvertone** creates an album that will take them far beyond their New York City stomping grounds. **Randy Ray**

People of the North

Steep Formations JAGJAGUWAR



The casual psychedelic grandeur of **People of the North's** new double-LP *Steep Formations* is a winning quality. With

nary a single musician credit on the set, the band—most of **Oneida** in one of their drone-bliss guises—lay out a simple yet endlessly complex free improv session featuring two extended pieces—one 40 minutes, one 30—each comprising a single record. While drummer **Kid Millions** begins the first extended cut, "Border Waves," at full force, he is quickly immersed into waves of shifting organ melodies and wind-whipped synths by bandmates **Bobby Matador**, **Barry London** and **Shahin Motia**. There are no solos, just contributions to the silver swirl, a structure of musical submission that mirrors its intended listening, prone and open to the cosmos. **Jesse Jarnow**

Big Chief Monk Boudreaux

Won't Bow Down F. BOO



The deep-voiced leader of the Golden Eagle Mardi Gras Tribe, recently heard with

Anders Osborne, Galactic and the Voice of the Wetlands

All-Stars, creates a vibe reminiscent of 1976's classic *The Wild Tchoupitoulas* album. **Big Chief Monk Boudreaux** kicks off this highly collaborative recording with the autobiographical "Monk's Mardi Gras," a slab of low-slung funk fueled by **Orgone's** rhythm section, with **Dr. John** on piano.

Boudreaux also specializes in loose and bluesy groove tunes, like "Footsteps," an ode to NOLA cooking and the African-tinted "Education," both hinting at Olu Dara. He rides **Orgone's** reggae riddims on the fiddle-injected "Don't Take My Flag Down," and brings the skronk on "Lightning and Thunder," abetted by son **Joseph, Jr.'s** rapping. The New Orleans *fonk*, as **Dr. John** pronounces it, is writ large. **Philip Booth**

honeyhoney

Billy Jack LOST HIGHWAY



On the alt-side of country, you'll often find male singers playing the role of the tough and world-weary

front man. The immediate appeal of **honeyhoney** is in the sultry, full-bodied vocals that the Los Angeles duo's fiddle-playing frontwoman **Suzanne Santo** drapes over their windswept, East Coast sound. You can tell from the way she bends a syllable or stretches a note that she's taken in some torchy jazz and neo-soul. **Billy Jack**—**honeyhoney's** second full-length—opens with **Santo** playing the sort of sinister, unremorseful characters that usually receive masculine treatment, before moving on to other territory. Throughout the album, **Ben Jaffe**—the duo's guitarist and heavy lifter when it comes to songwriting—tackles relational themes with youthful directness and gives **Santo** appealing melodies to work with. And it works. **Jewly Hight**

Paul Weller

Sonik Kicks YEP ROC



Former Jam singer **Paul Weller** takes a creative leftturn on his adventurous eleventh solo outing. Enlisting

the help of such prolific pals as ex-Oasis axe **Noel Gallagher**, Blur guitarist **Graham Coxon** and **Sean O'Hagan** of The High Llamas, **Sonik Kicks** is a 14-track jaunt through the more experimental ends of his record collection. "Kling I Klang" is Krautrock rewired for German beer garden sing-alongs. "Study in Blue," a duet with wife **Hannah**, recalls **Weller's** '80s group The Style Council—albeit with King Tubby at the controls. "When Your Garden's Overgrown" evokes Syd Barrett if he followed David Bowie's career trajectory. Though not as directly

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